

TEC

Tennessee Employment Consortium

What is TEC and how and when did it start?

In June of 2001, the Council on Developmental Disabilities funded a three-year grant through the Division of Mental Retardation Services (DMRS) which established a statewide collaborative effort to increase the number of people DMRS serves who are employed and increase service employment capacity. This effort has resulted in the development of partnerships with stakeholders in the system, a comprehensive employment database, and the provision of incentives to provider agencies for expanding employment opportunities.

One of the greatest challenges faced by people with mental retardation and other disabilities has been securing and maintaining meaningful employment. Whereas, DMRS believes that every person who wants a job in his or her community should be able to have one and that everyone, regardless of his or her disability, can work in the community if provided the necessary and appropriate supports, the reality is that most adults with mental retardation do not work or work for low wages in segregated settings. Across the country few people with mental retardation work in real jobs. In Tennessee, 18.4% of adults who are receiving supports and services through DMRS work in the community.

The following highlights some of the major activities and accomplishments of TEC to date:

Outcome 1: Increase the number of people served by DMRS who are employed to 25% and expand the supported employment service capacity. Year 1 numbers of people served by DMRS was 18.4%. Goals for the remaining years of the grant are listed below:

Year	Number of Adults Employed	Percent of Adults Employed
I	1,108	18%
II	1,264	21%
III	1,505	25%

Outcome 2: Initiate a process that involves stakeholder representation: At the state and regional levels this includes family members, individuals, employment and residential providers, ISC and therapy agencies, advocates, guardians, DMRS and Council on Developmental Disabilities, DRS, UT-TIE, APSE, ARC, TN Disability Coalition, People First, QRP, Arlington Developmental Center, Clover Bottom, Green Valley, and others. This outcome was accomplished Year 1. The Statewide Employment Consortium (TEC) and the Regional Employment Consortia are established and operating effectively.

Outcome 3: Develop a comprehensive system to collect data: This system includes information about the people who are employed, the agencies

which serve them, the level of supports they receive, their employers, the types of jobs they have, hours worked and wages earned. This outcome was accomplished Year 1. Year 2 is focused on maintaining and developing consistent reporting of the data.

Outcome 4: Offer Incentive Grants to expand supported employment service capacity:

Incentive grants were awarded to various agencies in each region of the state (East, Middle, and West @ \$50,000 per region) during the first and second year of the grant. TEC has sent out a call for proposals for the third year of the grant, which will be awarded shortly before July 1, 2003.

Outcome 5: Identify staff resources to support state and regional employment initiatives:

Individuals who exclusively focus on employment and day issues facing individuals, their families and those who support them have been established in the DMRS Central Office and in each region.

Outcome 6: Provide a Tennessee *Employment First!* Initiative Implementation Plan. Employment has been declared the first "day service" option for adults by the Division of Mental Retardation Services (DMRS). Want to see the full statement? Ask your local DMRS representative. The *Employment First!* statement was completed year 2 and is currently being implemented.

Outcome 7: Develop a (training and technical assistance) system to prepare employment-related personnel to meet *Employment First!* Initiative goals. Activities are many and varied but include things like: procure, provide or adapt curricula suitable to the needs of each region, agree to the specific positions that will need to receive training, provide training to the Independent Support Coordinators, Circles of Support, job coaches and job developers. Agree to competencies for each position. If additional material needs to be developed, develop modules, classroom activities, competency-based tests, leader's guides or practicum activities as needed. This outcome was developed during Year 2 and contains activities for both Years 2 and 3.

Outcome 8: Initiate marketing and external education. First, a strong and convincing marketing plan including marketing materials will be developed, for use by the job coaches. Second, a family education program will also be created and implemented for parents, guardians and families. Consumer education will also be implemented including job seeking and job preparation classes. This effort will include job retention strategies including job clubs.

Outcome 9: Join with partners in an annual *Employment First!* forums to recognize and reward individuals and organizations and to identify models for replication. This is currently underway.

How Can I get Involved with TEC?

Good Question! We need your support. Currently TEC is seeking individuals, family members, and others who are willing to become

part of a speaker's forum. Representation is always welcome at the Regional level. If you want to find out more about TEC, get involved with your Regional TEC group, or receive your own copy of TEC's Supported Employment Resource Manual contact your local

DMRS regional representative for more information. That contact information follows.

West Tennessee

Mary Frank
Director of Employment and Day Services
West Tennessee Regional Office
8383 Wolf Lake Drive
Memphis, TN 38133
901 213-1950
mary.frank@state.tn.us

Middle Tennessee

Roberta Manis
Valued Day Coordinator-Middle Region
Middle Tennessee Regional Office
275 Stewarts Ferry Pike
Nashville, TN 37214
615 231-5026
bmanis@state.tn.us

East Tennessee

Jack Reed
Valued Day Coordinator-East Region
DMRS East Regional Office-Greenville
P.O. Box 850
Greenville, TN 37744-0850
423-787-6753 ext. 107

jack.reed@state.tn.us

TEC Tennessee Employment Consortium

